

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF

POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

Fourth Series

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 501.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 2, 1873.

PRICE 1*½*d.

PHILOSOPHIC MATRIMONY.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

'I SEE,' said Miss Faversham, the aunt; 'that is why Mr Henry Collinson took me down to supper, and expounded his views, instead of getting me any plovers' eggs.'

'They are very nice, are they not?' said Miss Lucy Faversham, the niece.

'Yes, they are; though perhaps the price adds to their flavour.'

'The price of his views, aunt!'

'No; of the eggs: I do not attach much value to the other things.'

'But I do, aunt; if I am to marry him.'

'I daresay you do, dear; and of course they *may* be genuine for once; but men always utter most beautiful sentiments while in a state of probation.'

Lucy had one of those bits of tea in her teacup which are usually called 'strangers,' and she fished for it earnestly as she replied: 'I don't think he is hypocritical.'

'No more do I,' rejoined the elder lady; 'few of them are. They are simply ignorant. When a young man falls in love with a young woman, he is apt to think her an angel; and I do not call sentiments uttered while under that hallucination genuine, because they have no substantial basis. You have got a fine Grecian nose, dear, though I should not praise it, as it is exactly like mine; and a very pretty mouth; and a delicate complexion, which, as well as your hair, I may safely commend: but you have no wings; and when he finds that out, he may lapse into conventional views.'

'I suppose there must always be a risk,' said the girl with a sigh.

'Good; there is common-sense in that remark, and I am silenced. For the man is probably eligible enough, if you must marry some one, and that seems to be a mysterious necessity with most girls. However, I suppose he will be coming here to appraise himself, and then we shall be able to form a decided opinion.'

'I do think, aunt,' said Lucy, half-laughing, half-

vexed, 'that you never had a romantic feeling in all your life!'

'That is where you are wrong, my dear,' replied Miss Faversham: 'it was an overdose of the article, and not a lack of it, which kept me single, since a romantic desire for independence gave me a distaste for submitting my will to that of any fellow-creature, however estimable.'

'But Henry does not wish me to submit my will; he goes further than you do in the assertion of woman's independence.'

The conversation, which took place in a Westbourne drawing-room, during afternoon tea, was interrupted by a knock and a ring, and the entrance of the topic.

He hoped they were not fatigued by the dissipation of the night before, and was otherwise commonplace, and *would* take a cup of tea, which he probably liked, as Lucy mixed it for him. When he had drunk it, she slipped out of the room, whereupon Henry Collinson came to the point at once.

'Miss Lucy Faversham being an orphan, I come to you, as her nearest relative, to ask your consent to our marriage. I have got eight hundred a year—'

'Land?'

'No; consols.'

'Oh! better, perhaps.'

'And if I outlive a childless relative of seventy, I shall come into a lump sum of twenty or thirty thousand more. Am I well enough off?'

'Yes; we have no right to expect more. Lucy is no heiress; she will have five thousand pounds, tied up to her, when she marries, and that is all. The greater part of my income dies with me.'

Henry Collinson bowed his head, and continued: 'I appeal to your approval of my suit with some little confidence, because my views on certain subjects are rather advanced, and, if I have been correctly informed, such as you would approve.'

'Indeed! Are my opinions made the theme of conversation, then?'

'Oh, I do not mean to say that; but I have got the impression, I cannot tell how, exactly, that you are an advocate of Woman's Rights. For my part,

I loathe the injustice which makes any difference between the sexes. My wife, at anyrate, shall never be subjected to petty tyranny of any kind; I should no more presume to dictate to her than to any male friend.

'Why, then, if it is true that a woman likes to have her own way above all other blessings, Lucy ought to be happy. But I have no particular theories that I know of, and rumour seems to have provided me with a Strong Mind on very slight provocation. I rather wish—excuse me, I am so old, and you are so young, that I speak freely—I rather wish that you had a profession.'

'I have, Miss Faversham; philanthropy is my profession. My desire is to get into parliament.'

'Parliament! I thought that required a—well, a very great deal of money.'

'Oh, but all that will be changed directly. I expect to meet with many rebuffs, but feel confident of succeeding at last, and when I am a member, I shall devote myself entirely to the redressing of woman.'

'I see; pants and so forth. But I hope you will not persuade Lucy to adopt the new style until it is pretty general.'

'You misunderstand me; the redressing of woman's wrongs, I should have said. Her costume is of minor importance.'

'Is it? Wait a bit,' said Miss Faversham, laughing. 'Well, so you are going to be our champion, are you? Old maids like myself will have votes, eh?'

'And married women too,' rejoined Collinson, with enthusiasm.

'Dear me, what a number of separations there will be after a general election! And we are to be lawyers, and parsons, and civil engineers, as well as doctors!'

'Every profession ought to be open to both sexes equally.'

'Then you will make us serve on juries, I suppose, and do vestry business; be churchwardens, and so forth? I am sure that my sex ought to be eternally grateful to you, and I am sorry to think that at my age I can hardly hope to benefit by such beneficent legislation.'

Mr Henry Collinson had many good qualities, but a sense of humour was not one of them. He took Miss Faversham literally, and consoled her with the reflection that she was not much past her prime, and that the female millennium was actually dawning.

But though he did not understand that he was quizzed, he knew that he was accepted, and being invited to dinner that very evening, he went away supremely happy.

Everybody has an ideal to attain which would be perfect bliss: it may be swinging on a gate and eating bacon; or going into a third edition in two months; or averaging six trumps at whist; or rising to the premiership, and having your speedy death toasted at adverse political dinners. Henry Collinson's great desire was for domestic happiness; not, indeed, as most men understand it—marriage with a good-natured, even-tempered woman, who will study her husband's comforts, put up cheerfully with his whims, eke out his income, and provide a pleasant home for him when wearied with business or pleasure out of doors; but the perfect sympathy of

two souls, having one will, one interest, one home, and one purse in common. His courtship consisted principally of the expounding of these views, which seemed to Lucy very commendable. The main principle appeared to her to be, that she was to have her own way in everything; and that suited her. To tell the truth, she had been rather spoiled already: her aunt, who had had charge of her since she was nine years old, was no disciplinarian. If she liked people, she could not see their faults; if she disliked them, she did not believe that they had any merits; and she was fond of her niece. She was a clever woman to a certain extent, and had given Lucy a better education than girls often get, so as to convert her into a reasonable being, who could understand the why and the wherefore of things, and was not frightened at hearing that which she was accustomed to take for granted called in question; instead of being merely an accomplished child. That was why Miss Faversham had the reputation of being an advocate of woman's rights.

'My dear, she reads Euclid, and teaches it to that unfortunate girl!' said the gossips to one another. And they 'had no patience with such newfangled nonsense,' and dubbed the offender a member of the discontented female brigade. But, in truth, Miss Faversham was not qualified for that corps; she had no particular faith in the abstract advantages of the suffrage. For example, she knew that mankind was selfish, and that no particular class could be trusted to rule without some check or supervision from the other classes, or else it would get all the oysters, and leave its fellow-citizens the shells, and she therefore thought the system good which distributed the power of electing lawmakers as equally as possible. But she could not understand in what particulars the interests of English women were antagonistic to those of English men; neither did she believe that there was any lack of honest desire in either house to promote the welfare of the wives, sweethearts, mothers, sisters, and daughters of the members. She thought, perhaps erroneously, that if women are at any disadvantage, it is socially, not politically; and that the unwritten laws which some ladies think so irksome and galling, are promulgated and maintained by their own sex.

So that Lucy had not learned the humiliating misery of her position as a British female from her aunt, and it was from her lover's lips that she knew that men are tyrants and women slaves, and that a new order of chivalry had arisen for the emancipation of the oppressed ones.

She entered very readily into his views, and soon became convinced that she really was a most persecuted individual. The books he recommended her to read were some of them rather dry, but, as she was a talented skipper, that did not matter so much. Besides, it is worth while to be bored a little in the nursing of a grievance; it spurs the indignation.

But Henry Collinson was a lover as well as a philosopher, and pressed for an early date to be named for their marriage. Lucy said that she would be guided by her aunt, who made no attempt to delay it unreasonably.

'She is no companion to me any longer,' said the out-spoken lady; 'perhaps when she is married she will recover her senses.'

One thing she was obstinate about, and that was a religious ceremony, which the young man

wanted to omit. It was odious, he said, that one human being should vow to honour and obey another.

'If Lucy thinks that, she had better not marry you at all,' said Miss Faversham; 'that is my opinion; and so you must be tied up in the usual manner, by a clergyman of the church of England, or she shall have neither the five thousand pounds nor a breakfast.'

Principle is a very fine thing, but money is—money. So the pair were amalgamated, and toasted, and caked, and white-favoured, and packed abroad for a month, just like ordinary couples in the same station of life.

When they came back, they fixed their home in a cottage near a wood, within half an hour's omnibus-ride from Charing Cross.

They soon had plenty of society; Henry Collinson's clique was not a large one, but all the members of it called on his bride, who presently became absorbed in a pursuit which rivals gambling for fascination: the hatching of a revolution. A mere social revolution, it was true, lacking the excitement and danger appertaining to the endeavour to upset the established government of a country; but by no means deficient in elements calculated to set the outer world by the ears, and consequently to fill the breasts of adepts with a most voluptuous feeling of superiority.

The young Mrs Collinson had a 'superior' mind, as the cant phrase runs; I mean that she was not content to vegetate like a cabbage; her intellectual half required to be fed, just like the corporeal; so that she could appreciate the leaders of the set in which she now found herself, and perceive that they undoubtedly were very clever women. And not only clever, but with a great deal of 'go' in them; a quality without which ardent disciples are seldom made. Lucy soon became an ardent disciple; she knew, without vanity, that she was a more reasonable being than the majority of girls she had become intimate with up and down the world; she also knew, without false modesty, that her own mental calibre was far inferior to that of Mrs Noble, Miss Franks, or Priscilla Skeps, and the influence which those ladies exercised over her was therefore well nigh unlimited. And on their part they were proud of their recruit: too many of the ladies who flocked to their standard had only discovered the rotten state of society after they had fallen under its ban, and their conversion was consequently rather suspicious; but Lucy was a genuine convert. They also liked her: no man or woman was yet proof against the flattery of a genuine admiration; besides which, she was active and useful, and was soon admitted into their most secret counsels.

Henry Collinson was delighted.

Five years elapsed, during which the delight of Henry Collinson subsided a little. Indeed, he wore a long face as he ladled the tea into the teapot one morning, while his three children made things as uncomfortable as they conveniently could. The eldest, a boy of military proclivities, was drilling a squad of sugar-lumps, and swallowing an odd file at intervals; the second, a girl, was tubbing her doll in the slop-basin; while the youngest, who was little more than a crawler, kept trying how near it could go to several kinds of suicide without an actually fatal result, and howling because the experiments proved painful.

'Have you copied these letters?' his wife asked as she came hurriedly into the room.

'Yes,' he replied; 'they are all ready for the post.'

'Why don't you keep the children quiet? What a noise they have been making!—Take your doll and be off, Sappho! Let the sugar alone, Tom. Bless me, there's that brat roaring again! What plagues children are!—Do ring the bell, Henry, and let us have them cleared out.'

When this was done, and breakfast half over, Collinson came out with what was on his mind. 'Look here, Lucy,' said he; 'you are a sensible woman, and ought not to flinch from the truth, and that is, that everything is going to the bad. Our household expenses are double what people who keep up much larger establishments pay; our servants rob us; the children are neglected, and will be beggared, for we are spending our capital.'

'And whose fault is all this?'

'Well, I suppose you will own that we cannot consult our tastes and wishes in everything. Society could not go on if people did not attend to certain duties.'

'I suppose,' said Mrs Collinson, 'by duties you mean those sordid and degrading household cares which, as you say, must be imposed upon some one, and you would suggest that I do not take my fair share of them. But how can I? You know how my time is engaged; I have three lectures to deliver this week, one in Yorkshire, and another in Scotland, in addition to the board meetings and a mass of correspondence; while, except for relieving me of some of my work as secretary, you have absolutely nothing else to do but to look after household and nursery affairs. If you had been successful in getting into parliament, I should have withdrawn in a measure from public life, in order to set you more at liberty; but as it happens, it is my time that is the most valuable.'

'Yes, yes; that is all very good in theory; but, practically, there are things belonging to a woman's department which a man cannot attend to.'

'Are there? I do not know them. We are agreed that women ought to engage equally in what conventional prejudice calls man's work; why does not the converse hold good?'

'Because a man looks ridiculous in the kitchen or the nursery. Yesterday morning the servants tittered while I was ordering dinner; and when I came up-stairs again, I found that a dish-clout had been pinned to my coat-tail.'

'And of course you have given the cook warning?'

'Well, no; on reflection, it seemed less humiliating to appear not to notice it. But, after all, that is a secondary matter. The condition of the children is far more serious; I really cannot look after them properly. I do not understand what to do, and they are neglected. A mother has more influence with such very young children than a father.'

'Another maxim which men have invented to put all the dirty work upon their wives! It was you yourself who first opened my eyes to the cruel injustice of the relations between the sexes, and you cannot now blind me again. I know no more about the management of a nursery than you do; we have always left that to those who are paid for it, and I see no reason for changing now, because you are afraid of servants' ignorant gossip.'

'Don't lose your temper; I retract nothing I ever said, and I think I have proved pretty well that I

was in earnest! But I never denied that there were certain duties for which men, and others for which women, are best fitted. Pumping and fighting are amongst the former; and looking after children, and seeing that female servants do their duty, are amongst the latter.'

Mrs Collinson looked at her watch, which was lying by her side on the breakfast-table, and said: 'As I am pressed for time, we will grant your premises, though they cut several knots in a rather arbitrary way. But come now, what is the cause of this remonstrance? What has happened differently to-day from yesterday, or yesterday year?'

'Well, the fact is, I have wanted to speak for a long time; but this morning I discovered'

'Good gracious! Pack the nurse-girl off at once; send for the hairdresser, and have all their hair cut quite close, Sappho's and all. You really must attend to these matters, Henry; do whatever you think best; I have really no time to spare. If any particular plan suggests itself to me in the course of the day, and I have leisure, I will write you word.'

She was putting on her bonnet and mantilla while she spoke, and finished with the door open. But she had a last word, and came back from the passage to say it.

'By-the-bye, I shall want another five hundred pounds for the Female Watchmakers' Association. Don't look so frightened; it will pay in time, I have no doubt; but there must be funds to start with. I'll explain when we meet next; but the money is necessary; so see you have it ready, please.'

And she was gone.

Left alone, Henry Collinson uttered a violent and most improper exclamation; then he took his hat and stick, and went out to walk up an idea.

THE BALANCE OF NATURE.

WHEN man, from his desire to obtain sport or food, destroys some particular species of bird, beast, or fish, nature speedily places the matter before him in such a way as to indicate the error of which he has been guilty. Of this we have a striking and painful instance in the case of France, where the foolish and cruel practice of killing all sorts of small birds has given latitude to hosts of insects which prey on the crops. So too frequently the gamekeeper remorselessly shoots down the birds of prey that would kill the rats and other vermin which, whenever they obtain the chance, devour the grouse or eat their eggs. What is the result? It is simply, that more grouse are destroyed in one way than the other! The more hawks that are shot, the worse it becomes for the grouse. The hawk, like the sparrow, has its mission, and on a grouse-moor, that mission would appear to be the weeding out of unhealthy birds, which, if allowed to live, might perpetuate unhealthy progeny or breed disease, and so ruin the moor. The stock is kept at its best by the weeding out constantly performed by predatory birds: a scheme of nature to maintain a healthy and vigorous breed. The economy of a grouse-moor is not, we think, sufficiently understood. It would be well if a reliable estimate of its wild population could be formed, so that it could be ascertained, with more exactitude than is at present the case, what percentage of birds man

might shoot, and how many grouse per acre ought to be left, in order to multiply and replenish the stock. It has been affirmed, that to the mania for over-preserving game, we owe the grouse-plagues which have more than once prevailed during these later years; and, at a recent meeting of the British Association, it was asserted that, if the kites, falcons, and hawks, once plentiful in Scotland, had not during the last twenty years been so ruthlessly killed off, the grouse disease would have been stamped out before becoming epidemic, it being the business of those keen-eyed foragers of the wilderness to snap up all the weak and sickly birds they can find. A given number of acres of heather will only breed and feed a given number of birds, and if more grouse are hatched than there is food for, it follows, as the merest matter of course, that the birds will be weak and ill-fed. Nature, in short, has established a balance, which it would be presumptuous for man to imagine he could improve by disturbing.

This is well exemplified in a salmon stream. If all the ten thousand eggs deposited by the ten pound salmon in the Tweed were to yield fish, it might come to pass that the salmon of that particular stream would in time become lean and flavourless, and of no food value. So many acres of water will only feed and breed so many fish; just as so many acres of grass will only feed a certain number of sheep or cattle. Thanks, then, to its 'enemies,' the salmon is allowed to grow till it becomes of great money value; specimens weighing fifty pounds having been taken from several rivers during the last two seasons. The reproductive powers of the salmon, in common with all other fish, are enormous. The average yield of ova by a female salmon is one thousand to each pound of her weight; taking the existing race of salmon as averaging ten poundweight each, and allowing a stock of, say (it is a mere assumption), twelve thousand breeding fish to a tolerably large salmon stream, that would give an annual deposit in that river of one hundred and twenty millions of salmon eggs! Suppose, for a moment, that all these eggs came to life, and that the fish which they produced grew to be of any size, then the river would in time become so overcrowded with its population as to become one of the greatest wonders of the world, and a considerable nuisance into the bargain. But no such phenomenon can happen. There is a countless number of living things to which salmon eggs are as the breath of life. Various animals are always instinctively waiting upon spawning fish, ready to devour all the eggs they can find; indeed, whilst witnessing the sight, one would fancy that the salmon had been created for no other purpose than to yield food for other fish. What, for instance, would the value of a salmon stream be without its pike? That insatiable 'tyrant of the liquid plain' keeps down the number of the smolts. To it, and other enemies of the young fish are the salmon lairds indebted for a weeding-out process that assures the healthy growth of fish; in the same way as a gardener insures larger peaches by thinning the crop, or larger bunches of bigger grapes by having fewer on each vine.

One of the most prolific fish of the seas, according to its size, is the common herring, which, as a general rule, is only a few ounces in weight, and yet yields many thousand eggs—far surpassing in

that respect the salmon. But the herring requires to be enormously prolific in the reproduction of its kind, because the waste of herring-life is enormous. Man annually robs the shoals to a vast extent, and although man's depredations are enormous, they are reputed to be trifling compared with those of many other agencies which are daily at work. Man only takes his tens of thousands, but the cod-fish, we are told, takes hundreds of thousands, and the gulls and gannets of the neighbouring rocks are constantly engaged in exacting daily tribute from the herring shoals. We have examined the internal economy of a cod-fish, which contained in its stomach no less than eleven full-grown herrings! If a few hundred thousands of cod-fish go on day by day devouring herrings at this rate, their devastation in the course of years must swell to a vast figure. Then the cod is only one of the sea-enemies of the herring: there are also dog-fish, which follow the shoals in immense numbers, eating the herrings out of the nets in which they have been enmeshed. It has been calculated that the cod and ling fish taken in one year in the seas and firths around Scotland would devour more herrings than could be caught by fifty thousand fishermen. Solan geese live upon herrings during those seasons in which they can be obtained. A calculation of the herring-eating powers of these birds has been made, which is as follows: Say that the island of St Kilda has a population of 200,000 of these birds, and that they feed there for seven months; let us also suppose that each bird, or its young ones, eats only five herrings *per diem*—that gives a sum-total of one million of these fish; and counting the days in the seven months from March to September as 214, that figure may be taken to represent in millions the quantity of herrings annually devoured by these birds. It is no wonder if, after the contemplation of such figures, we find some economists saying that man can make no impression on the shoals, and that, therefore, it is impossible to overfish the herrings. That is a proposition, however, which we are not prepared to endorse. When nature out of her supplies has bountifully provided for all dependent on her, man as often as not steps in to play havoc with what is left. We know that the greed of man, allied to the urgent food-wants of our great and accessible seats of population, and, as in the case of sea-fish, the comparatively easy acquisition of a money-yielding commodity that costs nothing, has undoubtedly made an impression on various species of animated nature. Grouse-moors, for example, are becoming in some districts exhausted from over-shooting; and many kinds of inshore fish, notably the haddock, are yearly becoming scarcer, because of the incessant industry of our fishermen, impelled to constant work by the pressing demands of the public. Oysters are not nearly so plentiful as they were wont to be, and no wonder, considering the enormous numbers that are brought to market. London alone requires one billion of these delightful bivalves every year; whilst Manchester, Liverpool, and other large towns could consume a much larger number than they can obtain. Even in France, where economy is a study, some kinds of animals have been exhausted, nature having been overborne. The oyster-beds of France, for example, have nearly all in turn been dredged to death, so that it became necessary for man to plant them anew; and in particular instances this has been done with success. A

French oyster-ground which was barren in the year 1856, produced 320,000 francs in five years' time. In Ireland, the greed of man has despoiled many of the natural beds of oysters. Other kinds of shell-fish are yearly becoming more difficult to obtain; fishermen now experience a great scarcity of bait, and require to proceed to long distances to obtain supplies of mussels. Our inshore lobsters are annually becoming smaller, whilst men have to proceed to greater distances to capture them. We know, too, that the capercailzie had at one time almost entirely disappeared from Scotland. The wild white ox has vanished, and Shetland ponies are less plentiful. So are whales; men go farther and find fewer of them now than they did fifty years ago. Seals, too, will in time become scarce, so fierce has become the pursuit of man in search of them.

Leaving the river and the sea, and coming back to the dry land, we find many examples of similar phenomena; but, on the dry land, none of the food-yielding animals require to be so prolific as the denizens of the deep—the waste of life incidental to the position of land animals not being so considerable, and man being on his guard as to the importance of keeping up a breeding stock, although in some instances this is difficult, in consequence of the ceaseless demand and the high prices. Rabbits, for example, are wonderfully prolific. They begin to breed when they are only five or six months old, and as they have a litter of from five to eight young ones seven times a year, it is obvious that the rate of increase must be very large indeed. The fruitfulness of this animal has often proved a source of wonder to naturalists, and it has been calculated that if the progeny of a single pair were allowed to multiply for a period of four years without interruption of any kind, a million of rabbits would be the result! Of course, rabbits do not get leave to multiply at the rate indicated; man requires an enormous number for food, and then the poor animals have a host of enemies that prey upon them.

The pigeon may likewise be exemplified as a welcome contributor to our commissariat. The pigeon is a frequent and steady breeder, and its young ones grow with great rapidity, becoming good for food in a very short time. But those who wish to see the pigeon utilised, must go to America, and visit some of the pigeonnies of nature, especially those of the passenger-pigeons, which are of wonderful service to the human race, in consequence of the food which they yield, not only to man, but to his animals; farmers being known to drive their swine a distance of even a hundred miles, in order to fatten them on young pigeons. The plenitude of these birds may be estimated from the dimensions of one breeding-ground in Kentucky, which is forty miles long, and five miles in breadth. A colony of birds so extensive must have taken a long time to grow to such dimensions; and the chances are that now, when the population of America is so rapidly increasing, not a third part of the number of pigeons once obtained will be procured, both because man will kill more, and because the clearing away of vegetation will decrease the quantity of food. At the date of our information, the branches of the trees literally swarmed with the nests of the birds; they were as thickly populated as a Chinese city. At the breeding season, large numbers of persons assemble from far and near to obtain supplies of

the young birds, which are highly esteemed as food. Some trees contain over a hundred nests ; and the way the pigeons are got at gives the least possible trouble : the tree is felled, care being taken to make it so fall as to bring down one or two other trees along with it. As may be supposed, a great many birds of prey assemble at the breeding-time of the passenger-pigeons, in order to feed upon them ; hawks, buzzards, and eagles may be seen sailing about in considerable numbers, eager to devour the weak and helpless ; then there assemble also a countless number of foxes, wolves, bears, cougars, raccoons and opossums, all instinctively knowing that it is the pigeon season, and that they can dine luxuriously with little trouble on most toothsome meat. The waste of pigeon-life at the breeding and halting places of the passenger-pigeons is truly enormous, but necessary, for, although the birds only breed one young one at a time, they would, were they not killed off by man and other agencies, increase so enormously, that it would in time become difficult for them to obtain sufficient food.

That nature provides for all sorts of contingencies, is so obvious as scarcely to require illustration. We can derive facts and make inferences from the humblest animals. When, for instance, a sow has a larger litter of pigs than she can nurse, we all know what happens—the mother, acting the part of a cannibal, remorselessly eats the superfluous young ones. We need scarcely allude to the thousands of kittens which careful housewives annually order to be drowned. Were all the cats that come into the world allowed to live, we fancy the race of mice would very speedily be extinguished, and it is not unknown to us that the little mouse plays an important part in the economy of nature.

In the insect world, we find numerous examples of the providence of nature in filling up voids and in piecing out or repairing the ravages of enemies. As well as becoming the prey of numerous enemies, bees are subject to diseases of various kinds, particularly dysentery and indigestion. Of course, nature provides a large population for each hive. A swarm of bees will number about thirty-six thousand individual insects ; there is the queen-bee, about a thousand males, and from about twenty to about thirty thousand workers, which are of no sex whatever. So many treatises have been published about bees and bee-keeping, that the economy of a bee-hive may be presumed to be pretty familiar to our readers ; but it may be allowed us to state here, that a queen-bee has been known to lay in a single season as many as one hundred thousand eggs ! The queen of the hive will lay at the rate of two hundred eggs a day, and continue doing so for some time. The hives, therefore, can afford an occasional extra drain upon their population, in addition to the massacre of the drones, and other daily incidents of hive mortality.

It may be noted, as one of the curiosities incidental to that balance of life which nature so sedulously keeps up, that if the pairing of some insects be prevented by accident, or from some other cause, these insects, which, after they had fulfilled the greatest instinct of their life, would speedily have died, will continue to live for a much longer period than usual, as if nature had resolved to keep them alive for the purpose. So it is with some of our well-known flowers, of which mignonette affords a ready example. If not interfered with, mignonette dies at the end of a year ;

it is known, in fact, as an annual ! But if the flowers be cut away just as they are appearing, the plant, instead of remaining an annual, will live for years, and grow into a tree ; that is, if the same operation of flower-cutting be repeated year by year.

We might, as we have hinted, range over the whole face of animated nature, and bring forward numerous other examples of how the balance of animal and vegetable life is adjusted to suit the exigencies of times and places. It is a subject for profounder study than has yet been bestowed upon it ; and in these days, when the wants of man are as nearly as possible level with the supplies provided by nature, it would only be an act of wisdom to submit our doings to self-examination. It is said that we are eating up every year to the full extent of what we can grow, and this not in one, but in every branch of the commissariat. Stocks of old wine are close upon exhaustion ; and a bit of old Stilton cheese is now almost as rare as a glass of good old port. We kill our beef and our mutton before it has time to mature ; there are scarcely any four-year-old sheep ; we are eating too many of our lambs ; and calves are brought to market almost as soon as they are born ; in fact, the nation has become so ravenous that it devours everything as soon as it is produced, whether it be good for food or not. We eat our salmon before they are given an opportunity to multiply and replenish their kind. We are over-fishing in the sea, and exhausting our stock of inshore fish. We are working up all our ironstone, and we are cutting down all our old timber. It is said, too, that we are using up our coal-supplies so rapidly as to lead to a well-grounded fear, on the part of political economists, that, in a few generations, the enterprise and commercial grandeur of Great Britain will fall into decay. Surely if the balance of nature were better understood, we should act with more circumspection.

C E L E B R A T E D H O A X E S.

THERE has at all times been a proneness, more or less developed, for indulgence in the practical jokes or deceptions called *hoaxes* ; sometimes through self-interested motives, but more usually springing from a love of fun with a bit of malice in it. Antiquaries have frequently been victimised in this way, by the fabrication of articles purporting to be interesting as relics of past times. The readers of Sir Walter Scott's *Antiquary* will remember the metal vessel inscribed with the letters A'D'L'L', which Monkbarney interpreted to mean *Agricola dicavit libens lubens* ; but which Eddie Ochiltree boldly pronounced to be, *Aikin Drum's lang lade*. This was a supposed instance of honest misconstruction by a learned man whose zeal travelled a little too fast, due to Scott's imagination ; but there was a real instance in the case of Vallancey, an Irish antiquary, who found a sculptured stone on the hill of Tara, and engraved the six letters of its inscription in a costly work which he published ; he made out these to mean, *To Belus, God of Fire* ; but they proved to be simply some of the letters in the name of an Irishman, who, lying down lazily on the stone, incised them with a knife or chisel. In 1756, a wit, aided by an engraver, cut on a flat stone several words which were really an

epitaph: *Beneath this stone reposeth Claud Coster, tripe-seller of Impington, as doth his consort Jane*; but the seventy-seven letters were so skilfully divided into apparent words, syllables, and abbreviations, as to look exactly like a Latin inscription relating to the Emperor Claudius. For a long time the stone deceived antiquaries.

Gough, the celebrated archaeologist, saw at a curiosity-shop a slab of stone inscribed in a curious way, bought it, had it described before the Society of Antiquaries, and engraved for the *Gentleman's Magazine*. It purported to be: *Here Hardcnut drank a wine-horn dry, stared about him, and died*. The shopkeeper stated that the stone had been discovered in Kennington Lane, where the palace of Hardcnut or Hardicanute is supposed to have been situated. The whole affair proved to be a hoax. George Steevens, having a grudge against Gough, procured a fragment of a chimney slab, scratched an inscription on it in rudely formed letters, and got a curiosity-dealer so to manage that Gough should see and buy the stone.

Italy is wonderfully fertile in modern antiques, articles made to imitate ancient productions, and sold at a high price to unwary art-connoisseurs. Inghirami, in his costly work on Vases (*Vasi Fittili*), has a most absurd engraving of a vase, on which is depicted an archaeologist running after Fame; the lady has her thumb to her nose, exactly in the way known to boys as 'taking a sight,' while three engraved Greek words represent her as saying: 'Be off, my fine fellow!' No such vase existed; a hoax had been perpetrated by a rival connoisseur, which Inghirami did not discover soon enough to cancel his engraving.

There is no scarcity of instances, at the present day, and in our own country, of the manufacture of antiques—more for profitable deception than mere waggery. Roman vessels and coins are every year coming to light which the Romans never saw, and flint implements which certainly were not fabricated in the Stone Period. Numismatists and coin-collectors know, to their cost sometimes, what rogues can do in one particular department of fraudulent hoaxing. A very old silver coin is worth, in the antiquarian market, many times its weight in pure silver, or even pure gold; and hence there is a strong temptation to manufacture modern antique coins, producing at the cost of a few shillings that which will bring many pounds. There is reason to suspect that even in old times such sophistications were practised; for Roman coins have occasionally been dug up, in which the good specimens are found to be mixed with others evidently plated, and others, again, as evidently washed over with silver. The Greek islands are known at the present day to shelter men who make false dies of ancient coins, as a preliminary to the manufacture of new specimens so doctored up as to pass for old. The trade is a lucrative one. A certain engraver of these surreptitious dies is said to have netted two or three thousand pounds from the pockets of English tourists alone, who bought the counterfeits at high prices under the belief in their genuine antique character. The dies were really well engraved, and the coins put out of hand in clever style. That England exercises this art as well as Greece, is quite certain.

Literary hoaxes have been so numerous, that even a mere list of them would be out of the

question. There have been many like that which Madame de Genlis spoke of. The Duc de Liancourt was on intimate terms with the Abbé Delille; both were at Spa; and on one particular morning the abbé was deeply chagrined at a hoax which (unknown to him) his friend had perpetrated. The duc wrote some couplets on the fête-day of Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans, regular in structure, but most inane and insipid; he placed the name of the Abbé Delille beneath them, caused the verses to be printed in a few copies of a newspaper printed in another town, and contrived that one of these copies should reach the abbé, whose vexation was intense. Nearly parallel to this is the achievement of an American newspaper a few years ago, in which some wretched verses were printed, and ascribed to the pen of the eminent poet William Cullen Bryant; these were copied in many other papers, and came to the astonished eyes of Bryant himself. When the editor was some time afterwards asked for an explanation, he boldly avowed that his purpose was to establish the fact that, no matter how atrocious an effusion might be, the name of a poet who had established a reputation would make it true poetry in the eyes of a large majority of poetry readers.

The hoaxes which have no connection either with antiquities or with literature are not easily grouped into classes; nor, in fact, is it worth while so to do. Let us take a few at random. At Liverpool, in 1807, bills were placarded all about the town, announcing that, at one o'clock upon a particular day, a splendid model of a ninety-eight-gun man-of-war, built on Lord Stanhope's plan, and magnificently decorated, would reach Chisenhall Street Bridge by canal from Wigan; with a band on deck to play *Rule Britannia*, which was to be sung by the celebrated Madame Catalani; and a beautifully adorned barge was to precede the model, containing Polito's hippopotamus (one of the show-sights of that day). The people attended in tens of thousands along the banks and on the bridges of the canal nearly all the way to Wigan. The daily passenger-barge arrived at its customary hour; and not until then was it known that the public had been hoaxed.

Shortly before this date, when the dreaded Bonaparte was half-expected to invade England, the quiet dwellers on the south coast were in constant terror, imagining all sorts of dreadful things consequent on the arrival of the French. There lived at Chichester, not far from the coast, a family consisting of an elderly gentleman, his wife, and daughter. Some Cantabs got up a hoax to the effect that the only really safe place in England was at Cambridge; the family removed thither, and settled down near Trinity College as an impregnable station.

In 1812, a report was extensively spread about that a grand military review would be held on Wimbledon Common. As many as twenty thousand people assembled, who poured in from all quarters on foot, on horseback, and in carriages. The local authorities, seeing this throng of people, and knowing at once that it denoted a hoax, caused persons to be placed on the roads of approach to disabuse the minds of the sight-seers; but this was of no avail; the rumour was believed, not the contradiction. When, however, the day wore on without the appearance of any military pageant, the populace grew angry, then mischievous; mishaps

occurred, and the Common was set on fire. Hereupon messengers were sent quickly to London, and a detachment of Foot-guards marched down to remain a while on the Common until the deluded people had departed.

One of the most annoying hoaxes ever recorded was that which, about sixty years ago, was known in London as the Berners Street hoax. It drew the attention of the newspapers at the time; then of the magazines and the *Annual Register*; many years afterwards (in connection with a biographical notice of the hoaxer), of the *Quarterly Review*; and more recently, if we remember rightly, of the *Ingoldsby Legends*. Berners Street is a quiet street of hotels, and shops with private-looking windows; in 1810, it was still more quiet, inhabited by well-to-do families living in a genteel way. One morning, soon after breakfast, a wagon-load of coals drew up before the door of a widow lady in that street, and soon afterwards a van-load of furniture; then came a hearse with a coffin, and a train of mourning-coaches. Presently arrived two fashionable physicians, a dentist, and an accoucheur, driving up as near as they could to the door, and wondering why so many lumbering vehicles were so near at hand. Six men brought a great chamber-organ; a coach-maker, a clock-maker, a carpet-manufacturer, and a wine-merchant sent specimens of their goods; a brewer brought several barrels of ale; curiosity-dealers brought sundry knickknacks. A pianoforte, linen, jewellery, wigs and head-dresses, a cartload of potatoes, books, prints, conjuring tricks, feathers, ices, jellies, were among the things brought to (or at least near) the house; while mantua-makers came with baskets of millinery and fancy articles, and opticians with telescopes. Then, after a time, trooped in from all quarters grocers, coachmen, footmen, cooks, housemaids, nursery-maids, and other servants, come in quest of situations. To crown all, persons of distinction came in their carriages—the Commander-in-chief, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a cabinet minister, the Lord Chief-justice, the governor of the Bank of England, the chairman of directors of the East India Company, an eminent parliamentary philanthropist, and the Lord Mayor. The last-named functionary—one among those who speedily saw that all had been victimised by a gigantic hoax—drove to Marlborough Street police-office, and told the sitting magistrate that he had received a letter from a lady in Berners Street, to the effect that she had been summoned to attend at the Mansion House, that she was extremely ill, that she wished to make a deposition upon oath, and that she would deem it a great favour if his Lordship would call upon her. All the other persons of eminence had had their commiseration appealed to in a somewhat similar way. Police-officers (there were no policemen in those days) were sent to keep order in Berners Street, which was nearly choked with vehicles, jammed and interlocked one with another; the drivers were irritated, the disappointed tradesmen were exasperated, and a large crowd enjoyed the malicious fun. Some of the vans and goods were overturned and broken; while a few casks of ale became a prey to the populace. All through the day, until late at night, did this extraordinary state of things continue, to the terror and dismay of the poor lady and the other inmates of the house. Every one found directly that it was a hoax; but the name of the hoaxer was not known

till long afterwards. This, it appeared, was Theodore Hook, one of the most inveterate punsters and jokers of the day. He had noticed the very quiet character of Berners Street, and the name of Mrs —— on a brass plate on one of the doors; he laid a wager with a brother-wag who accompanied him, that he would make that particular house the talk of the whole town. And he assuredly did it. He devoted three or four days to writing letters, in the name of Mrs ——, to tradesmen of all kinds, professional men, distinguished personages, and servants out of place; all couched in a lady-like style, and requesting the persons addressed to come to Berners Street on the appointed day, for reasons specially stated. Hook took a furnished lodging just opposite the house, and there posted himself with two or three companions on the day in question, to enjoy the scene. He deemed it expedient, however, to go off quickly into the country, and there remain *incog.* for a time; if he had been publicly known as the author of the hoax, it is probable he would have fared badly.

The incidents in the life of Hook comprise many in which that unscrupulous man played the part of hoaxer. One of his victims was Romeo Coates, a man about town in the days of the Regency—a beau, an amateur actor, who delighted in riding through the streets of the West End in a bedizened pink coat of extraordinary shape. One day this eccentric received an invitation to a magnificent entertainment given by the Prince Regent at Carlton House. He was almost crazy with joy at the honour; dressed and adorned himself to the highest attainable pitch, and drove in his fanciful chariot to Carlton House. The card of invitation passed him safely through all the outer portals and corridors; but when a private secretary or chamberlain at length scrutinised it, he pronounced it to be a forgery. In vain did poor Romeo Coates protest that he knew nothing of any forgery or hoax; he was turned back; and as his equipage had driven away, he had to pick his way through the mud to the nearest hackney-coach stand. It turned out that Theodore Hook had cleverly imitated the invitation card, one veritable specimen of which he had contrived to obtain the loan of for a few hours. On another occasion, he associated as a companion in a hoax the elder Mathews the comedian, a man full of wit and frolic, but withal much more kindly and considerate than Hook. One day Hook and Mathews took a row up the river to Richmond. Passing a well-trimmed lawn at Barnes, they noticed an inscription-board sternly forbidding any strangers to land on the lawn. This was enough for Hook. Tying the boat to a tree, he and Mathews landed, taking with them fishing-rods and lines. Hook acted as a land-surveyor, Mathews as his clerk. They paced slowly to and fro along the lawn, pretending to measure with the fishing-rods as measuring and levelling staffs, and the fishing-lines as yard and rood measures. Presently, a parlour-window opened, and out walked the occupant of the villa, a well-to-do alderman. In great wrath, he demanded what the two interlopers were about. Hook coolly but courteously told him that a new canal was to be cut directly across the lawn, and that accurate measurements were necessary to determine the exact direction which it should take. Partly in rage, partly in despair, the alderman invited them in to ‘talk it over,’ a sumptuous

dinner and the best of wines were just ready ; and the alderman endeavoured to persuade the surveyor that another line for the canal might be easily obtained without touching his lawn at all. Hook and Mathews revealed the hoax before taking their departure, and managed to talk him into a hearty laugh about it—rendered all the more easy by the fact that the dreaded canal was only a myth, and that he had entertained two such eminent men as Mr Hook and Mr Mathews.

Many of our distinguished actors have been great lovers of practical hoaxes—not only comedians and farceurs, but tragic actors, who are popularly supposed to be always in a passion of rage, jealousy, revenge, and so forth. Young the tragedian, for instance, was once driving in a gig with a friend in the outskirts of London ; he pulled up at a turnpike-gate, noticed the name of the toll-collector written up over the door, and politely told the gate-woman that he particularly wished to see Mr —— on a matter of importance. Feeling impressed with the emphatic statement, she sent hastily for her husband the toll-collector, who was working in a neighbouring field. He hustled on a clean coat, and presented himself. Young said : 'I paid for a ticket at the last gate, and was told that it would free me through this ; as I wish to be scrupulously exact, will you kindly tell me whether such is the case ?' 'Why, of course it is !' 'Can I then pass through without paying ?' The toll-collector's further reply, and his vituperation when the travellers complacently passed on, need not be here transcribed.

THE VINE CULTURE.

ACCORDING to ancient tradition, confirmed by recent researches, the vine is indigenous to Asia ; it grows spontaneously in Georgia and Mingrelia, in the chains of the Caucasus, the Taurus, and Ararat. Though it is also wild in the hedges and woods of the centre and south of Europe, it has only become so by acclimatisation. Introduced in early times to Britain, the vine grows in the open air in the southern parts of England, but only by training in favourable circumstances, and the grapes are not adapted for a profitable wine production. Grown under glass, in hot-houses, vines are brought to great perfection, in England and southern parts of Scotland, but, of course, only for the table. Latterly, most extensive hot-houses have been erected in various quarters to raise grapes for market, and, with good management, the erection of such houses has proved a lucrative speculation ; for at some seasons, grapes of a fine quality bring from ten to twenty shillings a pound.

Vine culture is an entirely different thing in France, Portugal, and other continental countries. There, grapes of different varieties are grown in fields or on hill-sides, just as we grow our peas in gardens, or as hops are raised in Kent, and vast numbers of persons make a livelihood by making the juice of the fruit into wine. Into France, which is one of the largest wine-growing countries, the vine was introduced by the Phœceans when they founded the city of Marseille, about six hundred years before the Christian era. Local histories shew that the plant had to struggle with many difficulties, owing to the influence of climate. The custom of public imprecations and maledictions, pronounced by the

priests against insects and noxious animals, was common throughout Europe ; and up to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries public documents shew that the vineyards were especially the scenes of such demonstrations. Science has done more than these to save the plants from the larva and the chrysalis, by watering them with water so hot as to kill the insect, without injuring the vitality of the stem.

During the present century, the varieties of the vine have so increased by raising from seed, that great confusion has arisen in the naming of the vines, making it difficult to choose the kind most appropriate for a particular soil or climate. The Central Society of Agriculture in France has long been endeavouring to arrange the best varieties of French and foreign grapes under a true nomenclature. Count Odart made a large collection on his domain near Tours, and his labours were pursued by the Duc de Dezaces, who established in the fine garden of the Luxembourg about two thousand varieties. All these have been scientifically named and arranged, so that plants may be suitably chosen for the different climates of Paris, Tours, Montpellier, and Algeria.

It is more particularly as regards the quantity of sugary matter (glucose) contained in grapes destined for the making of alcoholic spirit that their value consists, the one being proportionate to the other. It is otherwise with the numerous varieties destined for wine and fine brandy ; these are grown with the utmost care in certain wine-growing regions ; besides the sugar, there are the aromatic principles contained in the pulp, as well as the tissues lying under the skin, in the seeds, and sometimes in the stalk. These latent flavours, too, require a considerable time of gradual fermentation, at first active, then slowly prolonged, for the complete development of that complex aroma called the 'bouquet' of each separate kind ; and it is only at the end of many years that definite results can be obtained, so as to judge of the value of the vine which furnished them. As for the chemical nature of the fruit, besides the glucose there are several kinds of acids ; bitartrate of potass ; albumen, which serves as nourishment, and also as a fermentation ; fatty substances ; and salts of different kinds. The iodides are met with in large proportions when the vine is grown near the sea, especially in the vineyards of the Ille de Ré and La Rochelle.

One of the first conditions of a good vineyard must be the situation. As regards more temperate climates, the side of a sloping hill from eight to thirty-two degrees of inclination, offers the best facilities for ripening. The steeper precipices of the Rhine and the Rhône are obliged to be formed into terraces, but from the grapes growing on these come the excellent wines of Condrieux, Ermitage, and the renowned white wine of Saint Perray. If on the slopes the vine produces less sugar than in a warmer latitude, its more delicate fruit gives a lighter, more agreeable wine, sufficiently alcoholic to be preserved for some time. The chain of hills called the Côte d'Or, between Sautenay and Dijon, furnish the Burgundian growths, none of which extend to the plain, but are exposed to the south-east. Neither the summits, nor the north or west side, nor even the plains, ever give the grower a first-rate vintage ; though there may be abundance of grapes, very productive of juice for cheap,

wholesome wine, provided the fermentation and clarifying be directed with care. All marshy ground and large trees should be cleared away from the neighbourhood.

The special composition of the different soils exercises a great influence; almost all chalk, granite, schistous, and sandy ones, more or less impregnated with iron and magnesia, are suitable. From these arise the differences of aroma, so that the various tastes of the consumer may be pleased. In all cases, the preparatory work of making the ground fit for the vine during its long existence should be carefully done before planting comes on. By hollowing out wide paths, the passage of the air and drainage of the soil are assured; as also the facility of transport and of lateral drains, if the subsoil retain the water. In the vineyards of Médoc the drains were dug more than a yard in depth, and the effects produced have been highly favourable. This work would seriously interfere with the roots after planting, for, if unmolested, the vines give their best products at the age of seven or eight years; when the plants grow too old, they are renewed by lopping off the branches, and if of a poor kind, by grafting, which has been effected on stems of more than a century old.

Manure of a powerful kind, judiciously administered, is of first importance in rearing grapes for the table; but in the case of vines for producing wine, manure makes the plant bear too abundantly, renders the grape watery, lessens the aroma, and makes the sap more than sufficient. All that should be given to the plants consists of the skins of the fruit, the leaves and prunings of the stems, and what remains after the pressing of the vintage and the lees of the wine. The earth that is yearly washed down into the lower ground by the rains, is carried back again, often in little baskets tied to the backs of women, who ascend the steep rocks with immense patience and fatigue.

In former days, proprietors were not permitted to choose the time of ingathering; laws rigorously executed determined in every place the day when the vintages were opened. It is only since 1832 that the ban has been taken off from Dijon, and each master can now be allowed to judge for himself. The ripeness of the grape is known by certain signs, and the moment must be seized, even if some bunches are here and there scarcely ready. The first frosts determine the fall of the leaves, and as from that time the fruit begins to deteriorate, it must be gathered. The same alterations will be observed if the autumnal rains have been much prolonged.

The arrival of the vintage is always expected with anxiety by the people; it is like a holiday which rouses the whole country. The work-people of the neighbourhood find it a lucrative occupation, such a number are required to fill a vat in one day. This is a necessary condition for procuring a regular fermentation; for red wines, too, the grapes must not be gathered with the dew upon them; whilst it is exactly the contrary as regards the white and sparkling kinds, for the juice, more easy to extract, is also clarified better. The vintage is carried on very methodically: the workers, arranged in a line, cut each branch without shaking off the grapes, laying them in a basket placed under the branches to catch any that fall from excess of maturity, a precaution of real importance, as avoiding great waste. Other persons exchange the full for empty baskets,

which they empty into larger receptacles, and again into the oval tubs which the carts carry and bring back from the presses. The arrangements vary according to the quality of the wine, when gathering the purple grapes of which champagne is made. These are preserved from being crushed before reaching the press; as the colouring-matter contained in the tissue under the skin would be dissolved in the juice if the slightest fermentation ensued; and the white wine which is drawn from the first liquid could not be insured. For this reason they are placed in large shallow baskets; and the manufacturers of this excellent wine, who go round the vineyards on foot and use every precaution, can bring the produce of dark vines to their presses a distance of twenty miles, and yet produce a liquid of irreproachable paleness.

The fermentation then commences: the germs of leaven lying hid in the grape, as soon as the juice flows freely from the cellules where it was shut up, come to life, and react on the saccharine substance, transforming it by degrees into alcohol, which remains as a liquid; and into gas, which is exhaled. The temperature rises rapidly, and the reaction is increased. Two accidents may happen: if the heat be too great, a second fermentation develops itself, producing abundance of acetic acid, and the wine is changed into vinegar; or if the temperature be suddenly lowered, the ferment falls, and lies at the bottom of the tub, making the regular action throughout very difficult. It is now well understood that the grapes pressing themselves by their own weight is a very superior way of establishing a regular fermentation, to that of men crushing them with their bare feet, which they never do completely.

When the grapes are thus left to themselves, the most saccharine part of the juice flows out spontaneously from the ripest fruit; if this be drawn off, it will produce a very delicate pale wine, and the ancients used thus to prepare a delicious virgin liquor. But it cannot now be recommended, as it is too mild, deprived of all bouquet, and leaves a residue, in which astringent and superabundant colouring-matter abounds. The more general way is to leave the partially crushed grapes and stems all together in the tub; an effervescence is created, which is a certain sign of the simultaneous production of alcohol and carbonic acid gas, whilst the water and natural acid of the grape penetrating through the skins, dissolves the colouring-matter, a certain amount of tannin, and other essences. The seeds and the stems assist in multiplying the aromatic and astringent qualities, and this plan is especially suitable for the ordinary red wines, and the more esteemed of the finer kinds, so much of which is in daily use on the continent.

As the fermentation proceeds, it brings to the surface the skins of the grape, forming a kind of foam, which the vine-growers call the *chapeau*. It is then that in many localities a second crushing takes place, and men descend into the tub, often at a serious risk, for every year it happens that one or more, breathing the air loaded with carbonic acid gas, fall into a state of asphyxia, and if not assisted in time, die. By other means it is necessary to return the chapeau to the bottom of the vat, or the contact of the air would develop in this spongy mass acid and putrid matters, cryptogamous vegetation, or mould.

The best time for drawing off the wine is still a

doubtful point; but that generally chosen is when the fermentation has nearly ceased, when the chapeau disappears, and the wine begins to clear. A siphon is introduced, guarded by a bunch of twigs, to stop the passage of skins, seeds, and stems; this is, indeed, the only way possible, when the process has been carried on in closed vats, vaulted cisterns, or the enormous barrels primitively constructed in Germany. As soon as the lees are well drained, they are carried with all speed to the press, that the remainder of the wine may be extracted. In Burgundy and Champagne, the old wooden vice has been exchanged for a powerful iron screw, and in an hour the liquid will have ceased to run. The lees are stirred up two or three different times, and the press applied after each; then all this juice, more and more astringent, is successively added to the first drawn, of which it forms about two-thirds.

After filling the barrels, the fermentation again begins, disengaging volumes of carbonic acid gas; and for many days the barrels must be left open, or the staves would burst open with a loud explosion. After a little time, the hole is covered with vine-leaves until the absence of fermentation allows it to be closed; then the slower process goes on by which the colouring and saline matters, especially bitartate of potass, are precipitated; whilst the ether with its vinous perfume develops itself; the tannin is partly changed into gallic acid; and some very volatile compositions escape through the wood, and the whole is transformed into good wine.

At the end of six months, early in March, the wine is drawn off as far as it is clear, and put into a fresh barrel, when, with extreme care, it is clarified with four or five whites of eggs beaten up into a froth, or with the fresh blood of an ox or a sheep. Sometimes gelatine or Flemish glue dissolved in warm water is preferred; and when the process is slow, difficult, and remains incomplete, recourse is had to alum or plaster of Paris; a practice that ought to be suppressed, as tending much to injure the quality of the wine. It has been principally used in the warmer climates, the south of France, Italy, and Spain, where the vine is grown on poles or cords hung across from tree to tree: the grapes thus ripen unequally; some are too mature, and beginning to decay, when the others are only just ready; the tissues of the former reduced to a brown pulp remain in suspension in the wine. In distant ages, the ancients employed plaster to close their wine-jars, and it was always observed that under these conditions the wine was clear; hence the practice has arisen of mixing it with the wine, when it never fails in success.

There is some little difference in the preparation of white and sparkling wines, as the fermentation is not carried on with the skins and stems; from which result a complete absence of colouring-matter, and a great diminution of tannin. The article used for clearing them is named ichthysocole, which is composed of thin dried layers of the bladder of the sturgeon, steeped in water, and reduced to a pulp. This, mixed with wine, and well stirred in, completes its work very thoroughly in the course of a day. It acts differently to gelatine, as, by reason of its structure in organised fibres it extends itself, and forms a wide network, seizing all the solid bodies it comes in contact

with, and precipitating the whole to the bottom of the barrel.

Nothing is more easy than to give many white wines the appearance of champagne, but the true kind will always preserve an uncontested superiority, by reason of the fineness of its perfume, its lightness, and hygienic qualities. The principal end is to retain in each bottle a quantity of carbonic acid gas, representing about a fifth of all that is produced during the course of vinification. The pressure exercised by the gas with the help of the cork is quadruple that of atmospheric air, and one of the principal difficulties is to keep in a sufficient quantity of fermentation to fill the liquid with sparkling bubbles. It is managed with great skill by the corkers, who hold the bottle with its neck downwards for a long time, then, by withdrawing the cork in the smallest degree, a rapid jet of wine suffices to expel the fermentation which has collected on the narrow neck. As to the quantity of sugar which gives it so sweet a flavour, that is owing to the syrup which is introduced into each bottle.

Much could be said on the subject of wine adulteration, which is now carried to most scandalous lengths; liquor, in fact, being sometimes puffed up and sold as wine which is not wine at all, but a wretched composition disgraceful to the merchant who deals in it. All this, however, was lately specified in our article on the work of Dr Druitt, on wines, and to that we refer, with the simple remark that the time has fully come for applying the statute against adulterations to the more common and popular class of wines—sherry in particular, of which much of a sham character is disposed of as genuine.

HIS OWN EXECUTOR.

CHAPTER XII.—A WOMAN'S COUNSEL.

ALONG the dark and sloppy streets Harry Butt strode doggedly homewards, his friends following him closely. It was not long past midnight, and the streets were still alive with passing traffic. Here and there a long line of carriages lit up by gleaming lamps, and of horses pawing and snorting impatiently under their water-proof sheets, and of men huddled on their carriage-boxes, dark and motionless, told of some ball or party for whose fairy frequenters these padded chariots were in waiting. And here you come to a light arcade, thrown for the nonce across the footway, where a policeman in a shiny cape mounts guard, and loafers and shivering idlers keep the ground, whilst between fit in and out visions of delight in pink and blue—one might almost say in buff—and cast a radiance on the pallid night.

These visions Harry avoids, and takes the dark, unlighted side of the street. He never turns his head, either to the right or to the left, but marches on, his hands clenched behind his back.

'Perhaps he will shoot himself,' whispered Lord Sertayne to his companion.

Porkington shrugged his shoulders, and looked unconcerned.

'Or throw himself into the river.'

'We shall see,' rejoined his companion.

When he came to Hyde Park Corner, Harry paused and hesitated for a moment. The wind was blusterous here, and long swaths of rain

drifted across the black, open void. Harry plunged across blindly, and presently turned up South Moon Street.

'He is going to see the Asphodel,' cried Sertayne.

Porkington nodded.

'Shall we follow him ?'

'I think not ; it might be dangerous. We will go to my chambers, and wait for him there.'

'But suppose,' cried Sertayne, 'suppose that anything happened to him ?'

'Well ?'

'How should I get paid ?'

'Don't trouble yourself about that ; of that I have taken care.'

'I may trust you ?'

'My dear fellow,' said Porkington with a sarcastic leer, 'isn't there "honour among thieves" ?'

'I say,' said Sertayne ; 'come, that isn't a pleasant word.'

'The thing itself is not pleasant,' said Porkington ; 'but what would you have ? We only repeat on a small scale what nature does on a large. The strong rob the weak, the cunning the simple. That, I believe, is the good old convenient excuse for any sort of misdeed.'

Sertayne shuddered. Such sentiments appalled him : at times, when he was sickly, short of money, and under his wife's management, he had experiences of devotion, and was a sedulous frequenter of St Mungo's Church.

Meantime, Harry had been admitted into Mrs Asphodel's boudoir. That lady had just returned from the theatre, and was seated at supper with her companion, a fat and stolid old Greek woman. Mrs Asphodel's magnificent proportions were not to be kept up without plentiful sustenance. A roast fowl stuffed with mushrooms, some cutlets in a silver dish, the half of a Strasburg pâté, stood on the table, and Mrs Asphodel and her companion were doing ample justice to the fare.

'Ah, my Australian hero ! come, sit down and partake, and after supper we will talk.'

'I can't eat,' said Harry, throwing himself gloomily into a chair.

'How pale he looks, how distract ! What misfortune has happened, mon cher ?' cried Mrs Asphodel in alarm, rising and going towards him.

'Only that I am ruined !' cried Harry, with a groan.

'Is that all ?' she cried. 'Well, that will wait ; ruin comes soon enough without bestirring one's self to find it. Courage, my friend. Here, take some wine, some champagne !—Now you feel better ; tell me how it happened ?'

'At hazard with Lord King,' choked forth Harry—at his room.'

'The rascal !' whispered Mrs Asphodel to herself ; 'the faithless rascal !—And Porkington too, I suppose ?'

'He backed me, and lost too—but not much.'

'No ; he could not afford to lose much, that Porkington. But you—how much have you lost ?'

'Eighty thousand or so ! All I've got !'

'Pouff !' said Mrs Asphodel, making a great mouth ; 'you shall not pay him. No, nothing ! You have been what you call legged, my young hero. He is a blackguard, that King. No one would suffer in reputation for not paying such a rogue as he.'

'But I must pay,' said Harry ; 'it was all fair. I was mad, that was all !'

'But you will be sane now. Listen ! He is notoriously a sharper : he can do anything with those long supple fingers of his ; turn a king or an ace when he wishes, make a die to fly up his sleeve. And in his own room too ! Why, my poor boy, you were mad indeed !'

'That is all very well,' said Harry ; 'but in these matters, if you cannot detect that you have been done, you must put up with your loss. And Porkington, he stood by to see fair-play, and he is a witness that it was played fairly. No ; I haven't much good about me, but so much I have. I should despise myself for ever, if I lost money, and then refused to pay.'

'But, my friend, if I can shew you, as I can, that you are the victim of a scheme or plot. Come, I will confess. Yes, I am ashamed, for, Harry, I have come to like you a little, and I would that you should think well of me. But to see you spoiled by these rascals—dishonourable rascals too—I will not have it. Harry, I was in the plot ; I was the decoy to lure you on.'

Harry groaned, and covered his face with his hands.

'Yes ; but I repented ; I have repented bitterly,' she cried. 'Porkington had a hold upon me, I could not shake off ; and oh, my dear fellow, you were so innocent, it seemed a shame and a sin not to pluck you ! But then, you were generous and kind, and my heart—yes, I have a heart, somewhere, a long way down—my heart smote me ! I would not permit them to rob you too much.'

'Good heavens !' cried Harry, getting up and pacing the room ; 'and I thought, yes, I thought you loved me ! This is worse than all. I'd have gone back and worked, and made another pile—I'd have won it all back, and more ; but to think that I have been laughed at and cajoled, that I have been made a fool of by a woman, that— Oh, I can't stand it ! Woman, I could kill you !'

'Kill me, then,' she said, posing herself grandly before him. 'I deserve it ; I am too bad to live ; but let me know you forgive me, Harry, and I shall die happily !'

In other women this would have seemed inflated and bombastic, but it was not so with the Asphodel. She was formed for the theatre, and went through her part with all her soul put into her words.

'Forgive ! Oh, I forgive you,' said Harry sadly, but kindly ; his sudden flash of passion had sunk down to its embers, 'if that is any good to you. Now I must go ; good-night !'

'But, Harry,' she cried, as she took his hand, 'you will tell me that I have not sacrificed myself in vain ? You will not ruin yourself to enrich these cheats ?'

'I will not,' said Harry ; 'I'll—'

'Thank God !' said Mrs Asphodel, throwing herself into a chair. 'If I have lost you, then, Harry, I have also saved you.'

CHAPTER XIII.—ALL LOST.

Notwithstanding his sudden disenchantment, the world did not seem so blank as before to Harry, as he left Mrs Asphodel's door, and he strode rapidly homewards with something of content in his face. She had behaved well to him in the end, and though it was bitter enough to feel that

he had been made a fool of, there was some consolation in the thought that he might escape the extreme consequences of his folly.

Then all of a sudden, an idea occurred to him that made him stamp with rage, and instead of walking, he began to run as fast as he could towards his chambers. These were conspicuous from afar in the dim, dingy street, having an imposing stuccoed front, adorned with Italian pilasters. The very area railings, which, of the other houses, were of plain iron with sharp spikes, were in Hardwicke Chambers of the form of a classic balustrade. Harry watched eagerly as he approached the house for the sign of any one passing in or out of the door; but it was entirely silent and quiet. There were no lights in the windows; only a lamp burning over the hall-door.

Harry hastily opened the outer door with his key, and ran quickly up-stairs. The rooms were still and deserted, the gas turned down to its lowest point. His servant sleepily made his appearance.

'Mr Porkington has not been in,' he cried.

'Yes, sir,' said the man, turning up the gas; 'and gone out again too: he has left a note for you.'

Harry tore open the note with trembling fingers, and read :

DEAR HARRY—As you authorised me to pay any of your liabilities out of the funds I had in hand, I have handed over to Lord Sertayne King the bonds which you intrusted to me, amounting, according to present prices, to £82,500. There is still a sum of £420 due to our friend, for which he is willing to wait your convenience. Better luck next time.—Your affectionate relative,

PROUL PORKINGTON.

'The scoundrels! Where are they gone?' shouted Harry, foaming with rage and disappointment.

'Indeed, I don't know, sir. Shall I ask Mr Porkington's man?'

'Yes. Go, you fool!' cried Harry. 'Run—don't stand staring there.'

Harry's man came back with an altered mien. 'Antoine doesn't know; he says his master left orders to pack up, and that he was to follow as soon as Mr Porkington sent him word. And if you please, sir, would you let me have the trifle of wages that's due to me?'

'Mr Porkington undertakes all that. He pays wages.'

'That's nothing to do with me, sir. I'm your servant, and I look to you, sir, for the money. Mr P. ain't paid me nothing yet, and I don't expect he will. So I'll trouble you, sir. Five-and-twenty pounds, sir; six months' salary.'

'You must wait till morning,' said Harry, hurrying out.

He went direct to the nearest police station, and to the superintendent in charge, who was waiting unweariedly at a desk. 'I want a warrant,' he cried, 'against a man who has robbed me.'

'We don't grant warrants here, sir,' said the man, looking keenly at the excited applicant. 'But if it's a robbery—a plain and simple robbery—we can put our men on the track without a warrant. Please, sit down, sir, and explain the circumstances calmly.'

Harry told how he had intrusted to his friend, Mr Porkington, his foreign bonds, which were all

payable to bearer. That he had withdrawn them from the custody of his bankers, owing to a hint from Porkington that he had better be careful, as there were rumours about, affecting their stability. That he had broken the lock of his own desk, and consequently intrusted them to Porkington, who had a safe in his room where he kept his valuables. And here he shewed the superintendent Mr Porkington's note.

'And did you give him authority to pay your debts with the funds he had in hand?'

'I certainly wrote him a note once—I had lost seventy pounds or so at Epsom; I couldn't go to Tattersall's myself—asking him to settle for me out of some money he held for me.'

The inspector shook his head. 'Ah, sir! then there's no criminal charge against him, sir, assuming what you say to be perfectly true. You'd better consult a lawyer, sir: it's quite out of our line.'

Harry traversed the streets all night; every haunt where Procul and King might possibly be met with, he visited, determined to take the thief by the neck and strangle him if he wouldn't give up the money. But it was all in vain.

It was broad daylight when, fagged and wearied, and worn out with unavailing passion, he reached his chambers once more. Here all was in confusion. Several executions had been put in for judgments obtained against Porkington. The landlord, too, had seized for his rent. Williams and Antoine were clamouring for their wages. Harry turned on his heel and went out, whether he didn't care. On the stairs he met a telegraph boy with a message; seven-and-sixpence to pay. Harry paid the money, in some faint eager hope that it might be an explanation of the affair as a hoax, a joke. But no: it was dated BOLOGNE, 7 A.M.—From P. P. to Mr HENRY BUTT:

'Arrived safely after a rough passage. Send the cheque to S. K. at Baden-Baden—*Poste restante*.'

Harry threw down the telegram and ground it under his heel.

'Lost!' he muttered—'lost! Once more a vagabond. Shall I endure it? Yes; I will try one more chance. Perhaps a lawyer—perhaps Costicle can devise some scheme.'

He wended his way to the City. Dragging himself wearily along, overcome by watching and fatigue, he was hardly conscious where he was going. Everything seemed covered to him with a thick impalpable mist. The houses rocked as he passed, and the carriages, and horses, and men, seemed like one huge animal, roaring and bellowing at him.

As he crossed the road, by the General Post-office, a huge van came up, driven at high speed. He heard nothing, saw nothing; people shouted, the red-coated men on the box tried hard to pull their horses up; Harry blundered blindly onwards; in a moment he was past the knowledge of any mortal thing; perhaps it was as well.

CHAPTER XIV.—NO TRACE.

Mrs Asphodel spent a somewhat unquiet night; she couldn't get out of her head Harry's unfortunate scrape; and knowing with whom he had to deal, she was afraid that he would find more difficulty in escaping from the clutches of his friends than she had last night supposed.

At about eleven o'clock, therefore, she ordered her phaeton to be ready ; and after writing a note to be left, in case she should not find Harry at home, she drove towards Hardwicke Street, intending to pick up her young friend, and carry him off to Wimbledon, where there was a review going on that would afford an excuse for a long morning together, and some uninterrupted talk. But when she arrived at the chambers, the porter informed her that Mr Butt had left that morning—that he believed he would not return—in fact, the man said confidentially, with a sort of half-developed wink, ‘it was a regular bust up.’

Sophia Asphodel sat in her phaeton, toying with the reins, as her high-mettled horses arched their necks and champed their bits at each lightest touch of her fingers. She was lost in deep thought. What had become of Harry ? She had guessed for some time that Mr Porkington's affairs were reaching their crisis ; but how could he have involved Harry in his ruin, if Harry had retained his wits ? The people at the chambers could not give her any information about Harry ; where could she get any trace of him ? She had half made up her mind to drive on to Lord Sertayne's to inquire there ; not that she expected to meet with anything but a rebuff in that pious, well-managed household ; but then she would be doing something, and it would relieve her own mind, if it did Harry no good.

But, as she sat there hesitating, a neat-looking man, with gray whiskers, and a general air of briskness and respectability, came up to the door of the chambers, and put the same inquiry to the porter that she had just made.

The porter grinned again, and repeated his answer. The man came out, looking rather puzzled.

‘I think I heard you asking for Mr Butt?’ said Mrs Asphodel, leaning out from her phaeton, and beckoning Mr Costicle to her.

‘Quite so, madam,’ he said ; ‘I was inquiring for my young friend.’

‘Do you know where a letter is likely to reach him ?’

‘I don't, indeed. I know of no address except these chambers.’

‘I understand you to say that he is a friend of yours ?’

‘Quite so, quite so. Yes ; I take a great interest in our young friend.’

‘Then, will you jump up, and I will drive you to the City, or wherever you are going, for I want to talk to you about him ?’

Mr Costicle cast a look of misgiving at the well-appointed, but somewhat fast-looking equipage. ‘If Martha were to see me !’ he mentally ejaculated. But, on the other hand, the glory of such a position in the eyes of Deputy Dibble would be great ; and then it might really have a good effect with the vestry. ‘I'll risk it,’ said Costicle, as he sprang into the carriage with all the agility of youth, and tucked his legs under the handsome rug that Mrs Asphodel held open for him.

‘Where to ?’ she cried.

‘Well, my offices are in St Cuthbert's Lane.’

‘Perhaps Harry may be there. I know my way to Temple Bar ; after that, you must act pilot.’

On their way, Mrs Asphodel confided to Mr Costicle her fears as to Harry's losses at play, and lest he might have been Quixotic and mad enough to

part with his money to such a sharper as Lord King.

‘My dear madam,’ said Costicle, ‘I was on my way to warn him against that fellow when I saw you. How fortunate he has been to find also a guardian angel in you !’

‘Yes, we are a very nice pair of angels,’ said Mrs Asphodel with a jolly laugh, that quite frightened Mr Costicle.

Mrs Asphodel drove fast and furiously, but providentially didn't kill anybody, or smash any panels.

‘Now we shall know,’ she cried, as they arrived at St Cuthbert's Lane ; and Costicle jumped out and ran into his office.

‘He hasn't been here,’ he said, coming out again in a moment. ‘But let us ask at the house.’

The door of the sexton's house, which was also one of the entrances to the church, was in the same line of buildings as the vestry clerk's offices. Costicle rang a bell, and Mrs Budgeon appeared.

‘Mrs B. Mrs B.’ he cried, ‘has our young friend Mr Butt been here this morning ?’

– Mrs Budgeon drew back in a little confusion. ‘I don't think he has, sir ; I'll ask.—Sally, Sally !’ she called.

‘Yes, mother,’ said a pleasant female voice from the interior.

‘Has Mr Butt been here this morning ?’

The owner of the voice didn't reply for a moment. ‘You know he hasn't, mother,’ then she cried in a voice of something like reproof.

‘There, you see !’ cried Mr Costicle, turning his palms outwards, and spreading his fingers like a fan. ‘I don't know what to make of it.’

‘Nor I,’ said Mrs Asphodel, knitting her brows, and driving off. ‘If I hear, I'll let you know.—Sally, Sally !’ she repeated to herself, still frowning ; ‘it was Sally he sent his love to that day.’

But she was obliged to go home unsatisfied, and she heard nothing more that afternoon of Harry.

CHAPTER XV.—ALL OVER.

William Costicle is sitting in his office in St Cuthbert's Lane, talking to his sister Ellen, who has come to pay him a visit. It is not his father's office, which is on the ground-floor, but the room above, which is reached by a staircase that runs along the side of the clerk's office, which is the outer office of all on the ground-floor. William's room was a back room, looking over the green churchyard ; the front room over the clerk's office was a muniment room, where were kept the archives of the parish of St Cuthbert. William held this room of his rather by the sanction of the vestry than of any right, for, in reality, it was devoted to the private practice of Costicle and Costicle, which was managed entirely by William. He was working hard to establish a practice of his own, and found it an uphill task ; for his father for some years had done little else but attend to the vestry business, which had increased very much during the period. Now, the income of the vestry clerk was a handsome one, but then, of course, it ceased at Orlando's death, as far as the Costicles were concerned ; and although William hoped to gain the appointment when anything happened to his father, yet he was by no means assured of success. More than one of the vestrymen with whom the appointment rested had sons in the

profession of the law, and a hidden canvass was already going on in the interest of one or the other of these. There would be a hard fight for the post when a vacancy occurred, and although William had a slight advantage in being in possession of the ground, and acquainted with the duties of the office, yet that wouldn't go for much, after all. There was a considerable jealousy on the part of many against a hereditary transmission of the office. The Costicles, too, although formerly connected with the parish of St Cuthbert—Orlando's father had formerly had a builder's yard there, and had been councillor for the ward—had long ceased to have much hold in that way. They had gone to live at Costicle's Grove, Chelsea, many years ago, and their interest in the parish had fallen off year by year.

William, although he was a cleverer, more capable man than his father, was not equally popular. Orlando had the airy Palmerstonian manner, the art of making a good deal out of nothing ; he could tell a good story ; and always had a joke ready to let off at the end of an interview, so as to dismiss his visitor in a good temper amid a cackle of laughter. Now, William was rather gloomy and anxious, and his efforts at liveliness were more appalling than his gloom. He had no tolerance for little jobs either. It is no wonder, therefore, that he did not get on with the vestry. But he was a hard-working, plodding fellow, and what he did, was done well, and by degrees he might be able to build up a practice. But the locality was against him. It was a good locality for packing-case makers and foreign warehousemen, but nobody thought of looking for a lawyer in St Cuthbert's Lane. And yet he couldn't leave it on account of the vestry business, so that altogether he was in a dissatisfied, anxious mood, like a man conscious of power, and not knowing exactly how to make it tell.

Orlando looked rather contemptuously on his son, and so, to say the truth, did his wife. Sam had been the favourite, Sam with the ready tongue, and soft winning way—Sam, who made such way with all the girls, and who could mollify the most indignant vestryman with a look. 'If Sam had only been a little bit steady, what a connection he would have brought together !' Orlando would say.

Ellen, however, appreciated William, and saw that he was the mainstay of the family tree. When she had found that the small savings of the family—small indeed—for Orlando was a man who lived quite up to his income, had gone to pay Sam's debts, and that liabilities were incurred in his outfit to the colonies, as a last resort, which crippled the family resources, she began to disbelieve in Sam, and to distrust the influences under which he had been reared. And then she began to appreciate more fully the genuine worth of her brother William, and to take counsel with him on family affairs.

It was some domestic trouble that had brought her down to William's office that day. The household at Costile's Grove was organised on an old-fashioned scale, comfortable, but rather profuse. Modern prices had imperceptibly curtailed the family income, whilst it hadn't occurred to Orlando or his wife that there was any occasion to retrench their customary rate of living. Tradespeople, too, were different. The old-fashioned sort, who never bothered for money, as long as they knew that a

man was 'good,' had been replaced by a class who looked keenly after their accounts, and managed to combine the highest prices with the smallest advantage, for credit.

'We shall have to put an end to this,' said William—'this wasteful system of credit, which always breaks down when you most want it. Father will have to close up with his tradesmen, and we must deal with the Co-operative.'

'I don't know how it's to be done, William ; you don't know how these things mount up. The books quite frighten me as they come in.'

'It'll have to be done,' said William. 'Why, it would be better for the governor to compound with his creditors, and start afresh.'

'William, I'm sure it would kill papa to do such a thing ; you know how honourably and generously he means to deal with everybody.'

'What's the good of meaning ? Why doesn't he give up his dinner-parties, and his wine after dinner ?'

'He's been used to that sort of thing all his life.'

'Yes ; he's been used to live well at his own expense ; but that's no reason why he should go on doing it at other people's, for it comes to that.'

'That's a very harsh way of putting it.'

'Times are harsh. At least, I find them harsh enough.'

'Ah, William, if you could only make up your mind to propose to Mrs Baxter, how easy life would be to you then.'

Mrs Baxter was a rich widow of some forty years of age, who was supposed to be rather fond of William.

'Pooh ! marry Mrs Baxter !' cried William, rising from his chair, and beginning to walk about the room ; 'why, I'd rather hang myself. Put it to yourself, Ellen—why don't you marry Deputy Dibble ?'

'He's never asked me,' said Ellen ; 'I don't know what I might do if he did.'

'I can't understand that,' said William ; 'giving up the essence of life for its flavouring.'

'A lady wishes to speak to you, sir,' cried a clerk, coming in.

'Then I shall go,' said Ellen. 'I shall be *de trop*. Poor Mrs Baxter, I understand !'

'You don't understand anything. Don't go yet. I daresay it's only some poor creature about her water-rate. Just go into the muniment room, and look out of the window, till I have settled her business.'

But William was sufficiently surprised when he found that his visitor was a tall, elegantly dressed lady, who was undeniably handsome, but of somewhat foreign appearance.

'I have come to see,' she said, 'if you have heard anything of Mr Butt ?'

'No ; I haven't heard anything about him for a long time. Isn't he at his chambers ?'

'But you have heard—your father has told you how he is missing ?'

'No ; my father went off to Brighton yesterday, and has not returned.'

'And you have heard nothing of him here ?'

'No ; certainly not.'

'And Sally, she has heard nothing of him ?'

'What do you mean ?' said William, rising, turning very red in the face.

'I mean Sally down there,' said Mrs Asphodel, pointing superbly to the nether regions !

'Do you mean Miss Budgeon, the daughter of the sexton ?'

'I know not what you call her ; but Sally—I know that he calls her Sally—does she know ?'

'It isn't at all likely, madam. Why do you ask ?'

'Heavens ! how coolly you talk. Why, perhaps all this while he is dead—dying, perhaps, if not—'

'I don't understand,' said William. 'Why should you bring the name you did into connection with Mr Butt's ?'

'Why, again ! Why ? Because she knows, if anybody. Call her ! ask her !'

'I certainly will have this cleared up,' cried William, putting his lips to the mouth-piece of a speaking-tube, and whispering to the clerk below to send up Miss Budgeon into his office.—'And now, madam, explain why you take such an interest in Mr Butt, and how you came to connect him with Miss Budgeon.'

'Why ? Because he is mine : I take him under my care. Do you know what has happened ? Oh, if I could find him, I might yet save him !'

William hammered on the table with his fingers. 'This explains nothing !' he cried.

At this moment they heard a light footstep on the stairs, and a knock at the office-door.

'Not before me !' cried Mrs Asphodel, who was nothing if not theatrical : 'the sight of me will put her on her guard. Here ; let me hide somewhere ! Ah ! in this room.'

She plunged into the muniment room, and closed the door behind her—not quite, though ; she left a little chink for observation.

William was puzzled and bewildered ; his experience was at fault. Mrs Asphodel was a being quite unconformable to any of his existing ideas.

'What did you please to want, Mr William ?' said Sally, courtesying demurely before him.

'To ask you, Sally—you mustn't be offended at the question—'

'Ask me the question, and then I'll tell you, Mr William.'

William looked uneasily about him before he asked the question :

'What do you know about Mr Harry Butt ?'

'What do I know about Mr Harry Butt ?' said Sally, repeating the question.

'Yes. Isn't that plain enough ?'

'O my ! Mr William, I do know something about him ; but mother said I wasn't to tell.'

'Quick ! Tell me all about it.'

'It was yesterday morning, Mr William. I'd been for an errand for mother, and I was coming home across by the General Post-office, and as I got to the corner, I heard a shout and a cry, and I turned round to see what it was. That poor young man, he'd been crossing the road after me, it seems, all in a brown-study, hardly knowing what he was doing ; and a post-office van, one of the big ones, with the two horses, knocked him down ; yea, I saw the great horses with their big clanking traces right atop of him, and his poor dear head to the pretty curls all over it' (here Sally began to cry) ; 'and the van came right atop of him, and—'

The door behind had opened wider and wider during this narrative, and, at the climax, Sophy Asphodel stood fully revealed between the jambs.

'And killed him !' she moaned, taking two or three strides into the room. 'Oh, my poor Harry !'

And I am the cause !—Girl ! she cried, seizing Sally fiercely by the arm, 'where is he ? What have they done with him ?'

Sally gasped and turned pale with the fright of this sudden apparition.

'Speak, girl—speak ! What have they done with him ?'

'Are you Mrs Asphodel ?' said Sally, recovering herself.

'Yes. What has he told you of me ? Well, child, we'll not quarrel over his corpse. Take me to him. Do you hear ?'

'Come with me,' said Sally—'come with me.'

Mrs Asphodel and Sally left the room together. Then Ellen came forward into the room pale and tottering, and sank into a chair by her brother's table.

'She can weep for him ; she can go and weep over his body ; and I— O William, I loved him, and I might have saved him !'

William got up, and began to pace the room again, clutching his hands and groaning to himself, and muttering : 'I'm glad he's gone, any way !'

SONG—THE WINDS.

THE South Wind sings of happy springs,

And summers hastening on their way ;

The South Wind smells of cowslip bells,

And blossom-spangled meads of May :

But sweeter is her red, red mouth

Than all the kisses of the South.

The West Wind breathes of russet heaths,

And yellow pride of woods grown old ;

The West Wind flies from autumn skies,

And sunclouds overlaid with gold :

But the golden locks I love the best

Outshining the glories of the West.

The North Wind sweeps from crystal deeps,

And Arctic halls of endless night ;

The North Wind blows o'er drifted snows,

And mountains robed in virgin white :

But purer far her maiden's soul

Than all the snows that shroud the Pole.

The East Wind shrills o'er desert hills

And dreary coasts of barren sand ;

The East Wind moans of sea-blanch'd bones,

And ships that sink in sight of land :

But the cold, cold East may rave and moan,

For her soft warm heart is all my own.

NEW EDITIONS OF WORKS BY W. CHAMBERS, LL.D.

MEMOIR of DR ROBERT CHAMBERS, with Autobiographic Reminiscences. *Seventh Edition.* Price 3s. 6d.

FRANCE : its HISTORY and REVOLUTIONS, to DEATH of NAPOLEON III. *Third Edition.* Price 3s. 6d.

An Edition of the same work, for use in schools, is now ready. Price 2s. 6d.

AILIE GILROY, A SCOTTISH STORY. *Second Edition.* Price 3s. 6d.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH. Also sold by all Booksellers.